

# Self-Care for Medical Staff during COVID-19



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Competitiveness

Driven to excel

Compassion

Intelligence

Isolation

Selflessness



## **Common Personality Characteristics of Doctors**



# Competitiveness:



Doctors are trained in a very competitive environment. They are not accustomed to doing minimal or walking away.



# Driven to Excel



- **Doctors are trained in an environment to excel, and to never give up. This can be good and bad.**
- It is good from the standpoint that they give their all for their patients.
- It is bad from a stand point of dealing with losing a patient they fought hard to save.
- Also bad from the standpoint of sacrificing themselves and their needs to care for their patients.



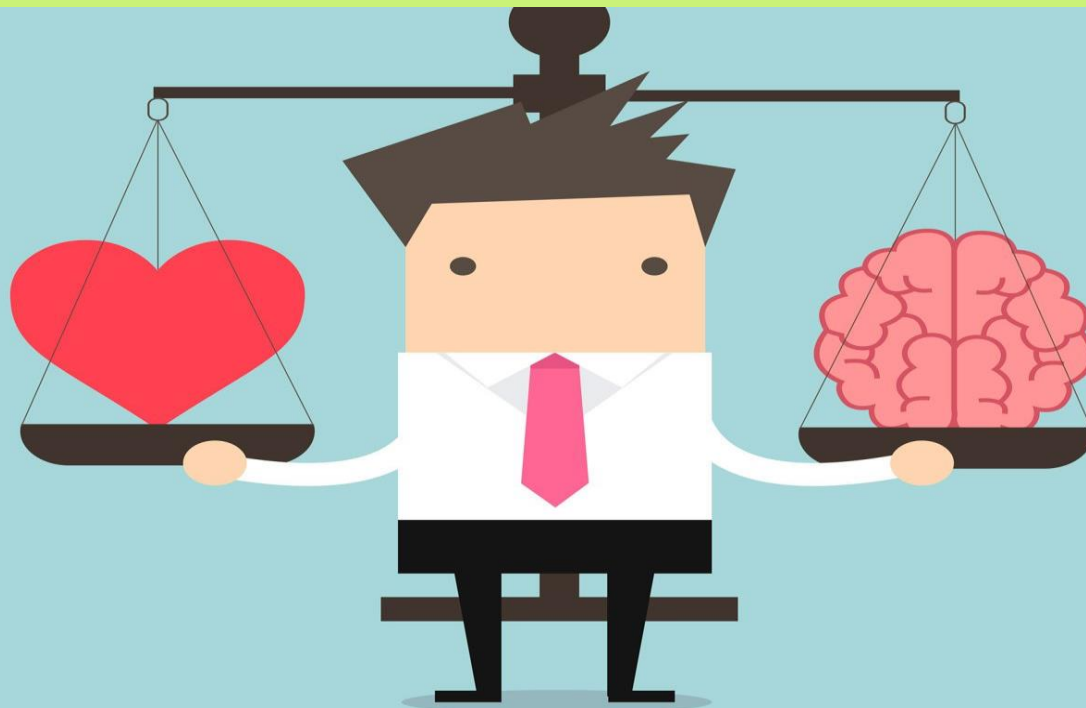
# Compassion



# Intelligence



Know the difference between emotional intelligence and general intelligence.



# Isolation



- Doctors are prone to isolate themselves, to a point, to be able to deal with trauma as part of their profession.
- Doctors might also experience a stigma for working with COVID-19 patients, which might cause others to avoid them.
- During COVID-19, Doctors might isolate themselves from family out of fear of spreading the virus.



# Selflessness



- Doctors tend to put the needs of others before their own.
- It is not uncommon for them to sacrifice their own need for sleep, time with family, healthy self care habits, and down time.





# Step One of Self Care during COVID-19



- The first step in caring for yourself is to be aware of your stress levels, and be proactive in reducing stress as you go through this time.
- **Remember:**
- **This is a marathon, NOT a sprint**
- Do self assessments to check stress levels and be active in reducing stress.
- Pay attention to symptoms of stress and intervene early



# Symptoms of Stress



- Sadness or heightened emotional responses
- Mental dullness
- Problems remembering things
- Irritability
- Withdrawal from friends, family or colleagues
- Muscle tension
- Fatigue
- Problems with sleep
- Anxiety



## Step 2: Managing Your Stress



**Remember to  
take care of yourself.  
You can't pour  
from an empty cup.**



# Managing Your Stress



- **Pace yourself and take frequent breaks.**
  1. Take a short walk
  2. Do 25 jumping jacks
  3. Find a quiet place, and do deep breathing exercises
  4. Get a cup of coffee
  5. Check on a friend or family member
  6. Play a non-stressful game or briefly check social media



# Managing Your Stress



- Maintain healthy eating habits
- Exercise
- Get enough rest
- Recognize what you have control over and learn to let go of what you can't control.



**Sleep is not a LUXURY, it is a NECCESSITY!**



# Managing Stress



- Have some fun or focus on a hobby
- Get out in the Sun
- Do relaxation techniques daily as part of your routine

Visualization

Deep breathing

Progressive Muscle Exercises



# Limit COVID-19 Info



- Only use reputable resources of information
- Limit the amount of time spent on COVID-19 info
- Make time away from the hospital about more pleasant topics or activities.





# Peer Support



- Watch out for your peers and let them know when you think they are stressed or need a break.
- Help your peers when you can but not to the point that you sacrifice yourself.
- Be open to peers who approach you with concerns and listen.



# Developing or Maintaining Resiliency

- Resiliency is the ability to cope with and rise to the challenges, problems and setbacks you meet in the course of your life and come back stronger from them.



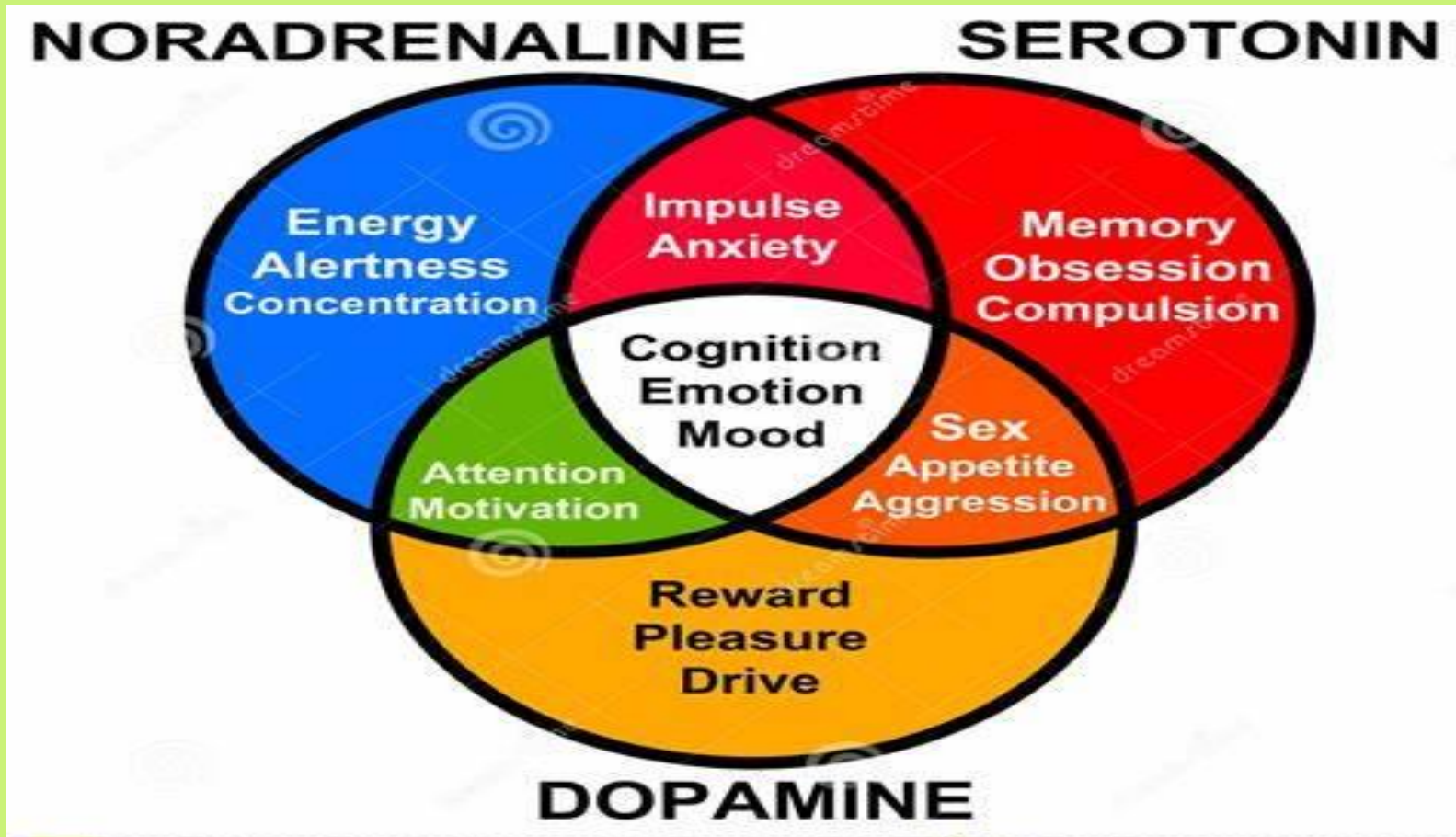
# 1. Self-Messages



- Pay attention to what you tell yourself.
- Recognize negative or unrealistic messages and change them. *This is much harder than it sounds.*
- Understand that what you tell yourself effects neurotransmitters, your mood and health.
- You can be your best friend or your own worst enemy by what you say to yourself
- Change negative messages to realistic positive messages



*Different thoughts produce different neurotransmitters so it's important to pay attention to how you think.*



# Avoid Negative Self-Messages

- “It would be selfish to take time to rest.”
- “Others are working around the clock, so I should too.”
- “I need to make sure it is done right.”
- “I can rest when this pandemic is over.”
- “I don’t have time to rest.”
- “What would the others say if I didn’t work as long as everyone else?”
- “What If I lose a patient because I am resting?”
- “I could have done more.”

**I'M STILL TIRED  
FROM YESTERDAY'S  
TIRED.**



## 2. Think about how things can be worse

- Things can always be better, BUT things can always be worse.
- If you always think about how things can be better, it is easy to get dissatisfied with how things are and be depressed.
- If you actively imagine things being worse, the current problems don't seem so bad.





### 3. Think about what's **RIGHT**.

Focus on the good as much as the bad to promote balance.

If you always think about the negative, it brings you down.



# Learn the difference between worry and problem solving

- Worry will get you no where but stressed
- Problem solving is where it is at.
- Problem solving means developing a plan of action and working on the problem according to your plan.

## SMART

### Problem-Solving Steps

**S** = State the problem.

**M** = Make a goal.

**A** = Actions – list the actions you might take.

**R** = Reach a decision about which actions you could take.

**T** = Try it and review it.





# Taking Control of Worry

If you worry a lot:

Pay attention to when you are worrying and make yourself visualize something pleasant.

Remind yourself that you can control what you think about.



# Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms to Avoid



- alcohol, illicit drugs, and abusing prescription drugs.
- Negatively assessing work contributions
- Isolating from family and friends
- Making a big life decision
- Not talking about what you are going through



# Knowing and Doing are Two Different Ballgames



- Doctors often educate and give advice to patients. Some patients listen and make changes, some patients listen but don't make changes.
- Knowing about something does not really have much meaning unless it promotes change and action.
- Knowing what you should do to take care of yourself really doesn't mean much if you don't practice it.
- Don't make the mistake of thinking you will take care of yourself later. Do it as you go.
- Remember: **It's a Marathon and Not a Sprint**



# Free Resources



- St. Mary's Mental Health Counseling provides 6 free counseling sessions for MU residents, their immediate family members and fellows. To schedule an appointment:
- call 304-526-1357
- email: [Melissa.Long@st-marys.org](mailto:Melissa.Long@st-marys.org)
- National Distress Helpline: **1-800-985-5990**
- Toll Free Multilingual Crisis Support:  
**1-212-461-4635**



# Questions, Comments and Answers



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